

**ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE**

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2 A change of switch plane operation is performed in a multi-plane cell switching  
3 node (20) which has a first switch plane (22); a second switch plane (24); and plural  
4 switch port interface units (26). In response to detection of a fault in the active switch  
5 plane, the passive switch plane sends a plane change cell to the plural switch port  
6 interface units, and stops egress traffic flow from the second switch plane. Upon  
7 receiving the plane change cell, each switch port interface unit redirects traffic cells sent  
8 from the active plane to the passive switch plane. Each switch port interface unit then  
9 determines when traffic cells destined thereto have been flushed from the first switch  
10 plane, and changes its active switch plane designation (so that the formerly passive  
11 switch plane becomes the active switch plane) so that egress traffic flow can begin from  
12 the formerly passive (now active) plane to the respective switch port interface units.